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SPEECH

OF THE

FRENCH KING,

&c.

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APR

France - Louis XVI, King

SPEECH

OF THE

FRENCH KING,

TO THE

ASSEMBLY OF NOTABLES,

Held at Verſailles the 22d of February, 1787.

WITH THE

DISCOURSE

PRONOUNCED

BY ORDER OF THE KING, AND IN HIS PRESENCE,

By Monsieur CALONNE,

CONTROLLER GENERAL OF THE FINANCES OF FRANCE.

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M,DCC,LXXXVII.

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APR

SPEECH

OF THE

FRENCH KING.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE ſelected you from the different orders of the State, and have called you together around my perſon to impart to you my projects.

This has been the practice of ſeveral of my predeceſſors, and particularly of the chief of my branch, whoſe name remains endeared to every Frenchman, and whoſe example I ſhall make it my glory to purſue in every inſtance.

The projects which will be communicated to you on my part are great and important. To ameliorate the revenues of the State on the one hand, and enſure their perfect liberation by a more equal repartition of impoſts on the other; to free commerce from the various ſhackles which circumſcribe its circulation, and to alleviate, as far as circumſtances will permit, the moſt indigent part of my ſubjects: Such, Gentlemen, are the views which occupy my mind, and on which I am determined, after the moſt mature examination. As they all tend to the public good, and knowing as I do the zeal for my ſervice with which you all are animated, I am not afraid of conſulting you reſpecting their execution; I will liſten to and attentively examine the obſervations of which you may think them ſuſceptible. I have no doubt that your opinions, all conſpiring to the ſame end, will eaſily concur, and that no private views will riſe up in oppoſition to the general intereſt.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE

OF

Calonne (C.A de)

THE CONTROLLER GENERAL.

GENTLEMEN,

THE commiſſion which is entruſted to me at this moment honours me the more, as the views, of which THE KING has charged me to lay before you the maſs and the motives, are become wholly perſonal to himſelf, by the unremitted attention which HIS MAJESTY has beſtowed on them all, previous to their adoption.

The reſolution alone of communicating them to you, and the truly paternal expreſſions you have juſt heard from his mouth, are ſufficient, doubtleſs, to excite in you the beſt-founded

confidence: but what ought to complete that confidence, and add emotions of the moſt lively ſenſibility, is to learn with what application, with what aſſiduity, with what perſeverance THE KING has abandoned himſelf to the long and painful labour which was required: firſt, from an examination of the various details which I have laid before him, to make him acquainted, in every point of view, with the true ſtate of his finances; and ſecondly, from the diſcuſſion of each of the means I have propoſed to him to perfect and re-eſtabliſh order in them.

After creating a marine, and rendering the French flag reſpectable in every ſea; after protecting and confirming the liberty of *a new nation*, which, *diſmembered from a powerful rival*, is become our ally; after terminating an honourable war by a ſolid peace, and ſhewing himſelf worthy of being the moderator of all Europe, the King has not reſigned himſelf to a ſterile inactivity; HIS MAJESTY has not concealed from himſelf how much remained for him to execute for the happineſs of his ſubjects, the firſt object of all his cares, and the genuine occupation of his heart.

To ſecure to his people tranquil and extenſive commercial relations abroad;

To procure them all the advantages of a good internal adminiſtration;

Theſe

Theſe are what the King propoſes; theſe are what he has never ceaſed to have in view.

Happy effects have already proved the wiſdom of the meaſures adopted by His MAJESTY.

Already, Treaties of Commerce concluded almoſt at the ſame inſtant with Holland, with England, and with Ruſſia, have made thoſe excluſive principles diſappear, which are as contrary to ſocial laws, as to the reciprocal intereſt of nations, have cemented the baſes of public tranquillity, and have diſplayed to Europe what may be effected by the pacific and moderate ſpirit of a Prince as juſt as he is powerful, towards multiplying and fortifying the precious bands of that univerſal concord, ſo deſirable for the general cauſe of humanity.

Already too have internal affairs taken a direction which cannot fail of leading to the proſperity of the ſtate.

The moſt exact fidelity in fulfilling every engagement has reſtored to credit that ſpring which can only be the reſult of a merited confidence.

Inſtances of protection beſtowed on commerce, encouragements accorded to manufactures have revived induſtry, and produced that uſeful effervescence throughout — the firſt fruits of which promiſe a ſtill greater abundance for the future.

In

In ſhort, the people have experienced beginnings of relief which it was impoſſible to render either more prompt, or more conſiderable, before the re-eſtabliſhment of order in the finances of the ſtate.

It is this order which is the principal and eſſential condition of all real œconomy; it is order which forms the genuine ſource of public happineſs.

In order to place this upon a ſolid baſe, and to be able to balance the receipts with the expences, it was neceſſary to commence, by liquidating the paſt, by acquitting arrears, by bringing every thing into a regular train.

This was the ſole means of extricating from confuſion the different employs intermingled one with the other, of acquiring the means of diſtinguiſhing what appertains to each reſpective year, of ſeparating the accidental from the ordinary ſtate of things, and of ſeeing clearly their ſituation.

Three years have been employed in this indiſpenſable preliminary; and theſe three years have not been thrown away.

When, at the end of 1783, the King deigned to entruſt me with the adminiſtration of his finances, they were, as the world have but too well known, in the moſt critical poſition.

All the coffers were empty, all the public funds were

were lowered, all circulation was interrupted, the alarm was general, and all confidence deſtroyed.

In reality, there were 220 millions to pay for the remainder of the debts of the war; upwards of 80 millions of other reclaimable debts, whether for the arrears of the current expences, or for the acquittal of ſeveral objects concluded or decided at an anterior date; 176 millions of anticipations on the ſucceeding year; 80 millions deficiency in the balance of the revenues and ordinary expences; the payment of annuities exceſſively retarded; the whole together forming a void of upwards of 600 millions; and *there was neither money nor credit.*

The recollection of this is too recent to ſtand in need of proofs; beſides that, I have laid before the King all the juſtificatory details: His Majesty has ſeen and examined them; they are now remaining in his hands.

At present money is abundant, credit is reſtored, the public funds have riſen, their negotiation is in great activity, and, but for the trouble ariſing from the effects of *ſtock jobbing*, (an ephemeral calamity which the wiſe meaſures adopted by His Majeſty will ſoon annihilate) there is nothing left to wiſh for.

The *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte* has reſumed the favour which is due to that eſtabliſhment, and which muſt infallibly increaſe by the extention of its utility.

The

The bills of the farms, and all the other ſpecies of aſſignation, are in full value.

The debts of the war are acquitted, all arrears are paid up, all expences are in the regular train.

The payment of annuities no longer ſuffer any delay; it is at length brought to the very day on which it becomes due; and 48 millions extraordinary have been employed in this uſeful regularity, which no man had ever witneſſed hitherto, and for which no man dared to hope.

Thirty-two millions of the remainder of the reſcriptions ſuſpended under the laſt reign have been reimburſed before their term, and their name, which was a ſcandal in finance, no longer exiſts.

The reimburſements at various epochas with which I found the treaſury ſurcharged are effected at a given day; and the liquidation of the debts of the State is is annual operation, according to the regulation of His Majeſty by his edict of 1784, conſtituting the ſalutary and immoveable eſtabliſhment of the *ſinking fund*.

The exactneſs of the payments, in ſhort, has produced ſo much confidence, and ſuch abundant reſources ariſing from that confidence, that not only have all thoſe dangers been obviated, which were ſo juſtly to be dreaded from the ſituation of affairs at the end of 1783; not only

only has that enormous maſs of engagements and of debts which exiſted at that period been ſatisfied, but ſufficient means have been found ſtill farther to face an infinity of unforeſeen and unavoidable expences: ſuch, on the one hand, are the ſums employed in cautionary preparations, and other political charges required *by the affairs of Holland*; and, on the other, the ſuccours, the abatements, the indemnities which the intemperance of the ſeaſons and various calamities rendered neceſſary in the years 1784 and 1785.

At the ſame time, His Majesty, convinced by great and judicious conſiderations that it was equally important and œconomical to accelerate the works at *Cherbourg*, has quadrupled the funds annually deſtined at the firſt to that immortal operation which His Majeſty has conſecrated by his preſence in that memorable journey, wherein he taſted the juſt ſatisfaction of collecting the benedictions, and the affecting acclamations of a nation which knows ſo well how to adore her Kings, when ſhe ſees herſelf beloved by them, when ſhe beholds the pains they are taking for her happineſs.

The uſeful works at *Havre* and *Rochelle* have been continued with the ſame activity. Thoſe at *Dunkirk* and at *Dieppe* have been determined on and begun.

New canals have been opened in ſeveral pro-

vinces, and His Majesty has contributed to the undertakings.

He has reſtored to the departments of bridges and highways the totallity of the funds deſtined to the public routes, and has even augmented them.

He has ſuppreſſed ſeveral duties injurious to commerce, and the ſacrifice he has been pleaſed to make of their produce, by favouring the exportation of our articles, is become a freſh ſource of riches.

His Majesty has created, has ſuſtained, has given life to *ſeveral branches of induſtry, which will henceforth ſupply the kingdom with a great many objects which were drawn from other countries* *.

Several eſtabliſhments of great importance have been aſſiſted, and received ſignal marks of a vigilant protection; among others, that of the forges of Mount Cenis, the moſt conſiderable work of that kind exiſting; and that of the *whale fiſhery* †, which takes its riſe under the

* Such is the extraordinary encouragement given to the *ſteel manufactory* at Amboiſe, the effects of which will ſoon be felt at Birmingham and Sheffield. Translator.

† The eſtabliſhments now forming at Dunkirk and Havre by the *Quakers*, and other *Americans* from Nantucket, &c., where lights are fixing and neceſſary preparations making by Mr. Barrel of Boſton, Captain Coffin, and other gentlemen. Translator.

moſt

moſt favourable auſpices, whilſt all the other fiſheries of the kingdom are encouraged, and proſper, and prepare for the marine a nurſery of ſeamen.

Our trade is taking conſiſtence likewiſe in India; the new Company are making the greateſt efforts to correſpond with the object of their eſtabliſhment, and have doubled the efforts of their zeal, ſince the King has permitted them to double their capital.

By occupying himſelf in every thing intereſting to commerce, His Majeſty has not loſt ſight of that which, in every kingdom, may be called the firſt and moſt important of all manufactures, the cultivation of the lands. The aſſembly he has formed to correſpond, as well with the intendants of the provinces, as with the various ſocieties of agriculture, and the individuals who apply themſelves to that ſubject, has excited the moſt uſeful emulation, and combined the moſt intereſting obſervations. Rural aſſociations are formed amongſt the proprietors, eccleſiaſtics, and enlightened cultivators, for the purpoſe of making experiments, and of giving to the inhabitants of the country the only leſſon capable of perſuading them, that of example.

The working of the mines, too long neglected in France, has fixed alſo the regard and attention of His Majesty, who is well aware

of the various reſources to be drawn from them. A public ſchool, become an intereſting object of curioſity even to foreigners, profeſſors full of zeal and talents, pupils animated with the ſame lively ardour, directors ſent into all the provinces to make uſeful reſearches, have already diffuſed information throughout the kingdom, and have conveyed it to the very depths of theſe depoſitaries of ſubterraneous riches which are alone attainable by well-directed efforts.

The operation on the gold coin, by putting an end to the diſproportion which ſubſiſted between the price of the former metal and that of ſilver, has produced the threefold advantage of ſtopping the exportation of our Louis d'or, which was become exceſſive, of reſtoring the circulation which was almoſt null, and of procuring a conſiderable benefit to the State, as well as a fair profit to individuals.

If I add, that monuments, worthy of illuſtrating any reign, are riſing up on every ſide, it is, that being of a nature which unites public utility with the decoration of the kingdom, they have a claim to the national gratitude. Such is the character of all thoſe undertakings His Majesty has ordered me to purſue.

The new quays which are about to embelliſh *Marſeilles*, will favour the commerce as well as the population of that antient city.

The

The magnificent ſquare now erecting at *Bourdeaux* on the ruins of an uſeleſs fortreſs, will procure at once the moſt important communications, and one of the moſt beautiful points of view in the univerſe.

At *Lyons*, the works deſtined to extract a habitable quarter from the midſt of a fetid marſh, were neceſſary for the ſalubrity of that wealthy and large city.

At *Niſmes*, the reſtoration of the *Amphitheatre* will aboliſh the unhealthy and wretched habitations which diſhonoured thoſe magnificent remains of the Roman greatneſs.

Aix will have, at length, a hall of juſtice worthy of the importance of its deſtination.

Dunkirk will ſee her long-continued misfortunes repaired by *the reſtoration of her ſluices and her port.*

In the *Capital*, the works begun, to form extenſive ſpaces for the antient markets, to conſtruct new ones, ſtill more commodious, to procure acceſs to them free from obſtruction, and to clear the bridges of thoſe deformed and fragile buildings with which they were ſurcharged, are ſo many benefactions conſecrated by His Majeſty to humanity, rather than to his glory; and what renders theſe important works ſtill more precious is, that their execution is operated, and will be entirely completed, by means which are neither onerous to the Royal Treaſury

Treaſury nor to the People; by means which will derange no other deſtination, which will retard no payment.

In ſhort, Gentlemen, in the midſt of all theſe undertakings, each department has received whatever it has deemed neceſſary for its ſervice; each intendant has obtained the ſuccours he has demanded for his generality; each creditor of the State has been paid every thing he had a right to claim: nobody complains, no claimant has offered himſelf in vain, no perſon is repulſed by the ſad allegation *of the diſordered ſituation of the finances*, which was ſo long the formulary of all the anſwers of adminiſtration.

His Majesty has even cloſed the account of ſeveral indemnities admitted to be juſt, but which were referred to more favourable times. He has done juſtice to all the world, and has been able to follow the dictates of his natural beneficence, without experiencing the regret of aggravating the burdens of his people, without making any augmentation, either directly or indirectly, of any ſort of impoſts, without eſtabliſhing, any new duties, even for the purpoſe of replacing thoſe which are ſuppreſſed.

From this ſuccinct expoſure of the payments and operations effected in three years, manifeſted by the deciſions of the King, you are to judge, Gentlemen, whether the expences have been

been looked after with attention, and whether order has ſubſiſted in the adminiſtration of the finances. Salutary effects leave no room to preſume a vicious principle; and whatever may be the vain aſſertions of perſons ill informed, it is always from great reſults that we muſt appreciate the œconomy of a vaſt adminiſtration.

I have delivered to the King accurate and minute details of every thing which has been *given, acquitted, exchanged, borrowed, and anticipated*, ſince His Majeſty has deigned to entruſt me with his finances; I have ſubjoined to them all the documents, all the juſtificatory titles of authorization, and of employ. His Majesty has examined them all; he has kept them; he is continually enabled to verify all the articles by himſelf; nor do I fear that the moſt envenomed malignity can cite any real object which is not compriſed in them.

It is not my place, unqueſtionably, to make mention of myſelf in this auguſt Aſſembly, where nothing ſhould be agitated but the moſt important intereſts of the ſtate. But what I have to obſerve on the ſubject of œconomy is not foreign to them; and before I develope the motives which have led His Majesty to the reſolutions that he wiſhes, Gentlemen, to communicate, it may not be ſuperfluous to ſhew you, that their neceſſity can only be regarded

garded as the conſequence of a relaxation on the head of expenditure.

In general, the œconomy of a Miniſter of Finances may exiſt under two forms ſo different, that they may be called two ſpecies of œconomy.

The one, which ſtrikes every eye by ſevere externals, which proclaims itſelf by brilliant, but harſhly-pronounced refuſals, which holds up rigour in the minuteſt objects, in order to diſcourage the croud of claimants. This is an impoſing appearance which proves nothing in reality, but which operates wonderfully on opinion; it has the double advantage of chaſing away importunate cupidity, and of tranquilliſing unquiet ignorance.

The other, which attaches more to duty than to character, can produce more, with leſs *éclât*; ſtrict and reſerved reſpecting every thing of ſome importance, it affects not auſterity in objects where there is none; it ſuffers men to talk of what it grants, and is ſilent on the ſubject of its ſavings; becauſe it is ſeen acceſſible to demands, the world will not believe that it rejects the greateſt part of them; becauſe it ſtrives to palliate the bitterneſs of refuſals, it is thought incapable of refuſing; becauſe it poſſeſſes not the uſeful and commodious reputation of inflexibility, mankind refuſe to it the merit of a ſage reſerve; and not unfrequently,

whilſt

whilſt by an aſſiduous application to all the details of an immenſe adminiſtration, it preſerves the finances from the moſt fatal abuſes, and the moſt ruinous miſmanagement; it ſeems to calumniate itſelf by an exterior of facility, which the ſpirit of miſchief ſoon transforms into profuſion.

But what matters the appearance, if the reality be inconteſtible? Is it poſſible to perſuade men that the liberalities of government are become exceſſive, when it is authenticated by the effective accounts of the laſt year, that the penſions which were notoriouſly riſen to twenty-eight millions, amount at this moment only to about twenty-ſix, and they will continue neceſſarily to decreaſe every year by the execution of the regulation of His Majeſty of the 8th of May, 1785? will it be denied, that in a monarchy like France, the moſt certain, the greateſt of œconomies conſiſts in not making falſe operations; that a ſingle error of adminiſtration, one erroneous ſpeculation, one ill-calculated loan, one retrograde movement, coſts infinitely more to the public treaſury, without its being perceived, than thoſe oſtenſible expences of which ſo much is ſaid; and that the title of an œconomical adminiſtrator is rather due to him againſt whom no faulty operation can be quoted, than to him who ſhould bend his attention to ſavings not unfrequently illuſory,

and which are invariably more advantageous to the Miniſter who aſſumes the merit of them, than to the ſtate, the uſeful ſplendor of which is incompatible with a ſterile parſimony.

As for the reſt, circumſtances command: I ſhould have loſt every thing, had I aſſumed the attitude of penury at the moment when it was my duty to diſſemble its reality. All my reſources, when the King gave me the conduct of his finances, conſiſted in credit; all my efforts have tended to its reſtoration. Money was wanting, becauſe it did not circulate; it was neceſſary to diffuſe money, to attract more; it was neceſſary to import ſpecie from abroad, to draw out that which was concealed by fear at home, and to aſſume the exterior of abundance, to hide the extent of our neceſſities. The eſſential point was to reſtore loſt confidence; and to attain this, much was to be repaired in the public opinion. It was neceſſary to carry exactneſs into the payments even beyond exigibility, that it might not appear to fall ſhort of it. It was neceſſary to make infinite reimburſements, in order to receive ſtill more; it was neceſſary to aboliſh the terror of thoſe ſiniſter methods, the ſole apprehenſion of which would fix a ſtigma on a reign characterized by wiſdom and by virtue; it was neceſſary, in ſhort, to place this country on a footing, in the eyes of foreigners, with the

nations

nations the moſt faithful to their engagements, and to give all Europe a juſt idea of the fecundity of our reſources.

The King, to whom I have given an account of every thing, has judged my motives, and regulated in conſequence the ſteps I have purſued. His Majesty has admitted the neceſſity of commencing by collecting the powers, and reviving the vigour of the body politic, before we preſumed to ſound its inveterate wounds, and above all, before we proceeded to lay them open, which is only allowable, when we are ready to apply the healing remedy.

This is the Point to which I am at length arrived. For a whole year I have not ceaſed labouring to acquire a more accurate knowledge than has ever yet been had of the ſituation of the finances, and meditating profoundly on what they require.

It ſeems an eaſy taſk for a Miniſter of Finances to form an exact account of the ordinary and annual revenue and expenditure. One would imagine he muſt find this in the various ſtates of the actual ſituation tranſmitted to him at the end of every year, and which he himſelf preſents to the King, for the eſtabliſhment of the neceſſary funds for the enſuing year.

But theſe ſtates, whatever pains are beſtowed on their perfection, can only ſerve to diſplay

the extraordinary reſources to be procured within the year for which they are drawn up; nothing preciſe nor certain can be concluded from them, reſpecting the ordinary ſituation. The prodigious number of heterogeneous and variable parts of which they are compoſed, the intricacy of the different employs, the confuſion ariſing from the local deductions from the collections more or leſs retarded, the value of the aſſeſſments and aſſignations carried from one year to the other, the incalculable multitude of unforeſeen cauſes which may change the order of the expences and the payments; the almoſt inevitable mixture, in ſhort, of the current and future arrears, of the fixed and of the caſual expenditure, of what is only the reſult of transfers, with that which is to be carried to the effective credit; all theſe cauſes combined, render it extremely difficult to diſcriminate what belongs to each year, ſo as to form a juſt balance of the ordinary and annual ſituation.

Perſuaded that it is of the greateſt conſequence to aſcertain this, and that it is an indiſpenſable duty of my office to inform the King of it without any diſſimulation, as well as ſerving, according to his own principles, a Monarch who loves the truth; I have neglected nothing to enable myſelf to lay before him a general account of his finances, the accuracy

curacy of which I could juſtify and vouch for. I have there carefully diſtinguiſhed, and in columns, the revenues in their whole integrity, the deductions they undergo before they reach the Royal Treaſury, with their neat amount, ſuch as it is actually paid in, for each reſpective year.

I have purſued the ſame method in the expences; I have ſeparated all the extraordinaries from thoſe which muſt be looked upon as annual; I have comprehended, under the latter, the proportions of them acquitted on the ſpot, and have claſſed them all according to their dates and aſſignments, and to the periods to which they reſpectively relate.

Theſe accounts, prepared in two points of view, the one for the year 1787, the other for an ordinary year, preſent a very correct balance of the annual receipts and expences; theſe I have delivered to the King, ſupported by ſixty-three particular ſtates, which furniſh the detail of all the articles, and His Majesty, who has been pleaſed to make a profound ſtudy of them, with all that application which he invariably beſtows on every thing which merits his attention, is at preſent better informed, than it is poſſible for any perſon to be in his kindgom, of the true ſituation of his finances.

THE RESULTS of this information could not appear to him either doubtful or satisfactory.

It is my duty to avow it, and I have taken care not to conceal any part of it, that *the annual deficiency is very conſiderable*; I have diſcloſed to the King the origin, the progreſs, and the cauſes of this deficiency.

Its origin is of great antiquity. The deficiency in France has exiſted for centuries. Syſtem, by overturning private fortunes, ſhould at leaſt have re-eſtabliſhed a level in the finances of the ſtate: this object has miſcarried; and it failed of ſucceſs even under the œconomical adminiſtration of Cardinal de Fleury. This is not a vulgar opinion; it is the fact, and it ſtands confirmed by an examination at the Royal Treaſury of the accounts of that adminiſtration that a deficiency invariably ſubſiſted during the whole of its exiſtence.

Its progreſs had become frightful under the laſt reign. The deficiency exceeded 74 millions, when the Abbe Terray was called to the adminiſtration of the finances; it was ſtill at 40 millions when he went out of place. By the memoir, however, which he delivered to the King in 1774, accompanied with a ſtate of the receipts and the expenditure for the ſame year, he had only made the annual deficiency amount to 27,800,000 livres; but it is admitted, and proved

proved by the effective account of the ſame year, that it was not then ſhort, in reality, of 40,200,000 livres.

This difference confirms what I have advanced on the difficulty of forming an exact balance of the ordinary revenue and expenditure.

The finances were ſtill in the higheſt diſorder when His Majesty mounted the Throne. They remained nearly in the ſame ſtate till 1776, a period at which the deficiency was eſtimated at 37 millions by the gentleman himſelf, who was ſhortly after employed in the direction of the finances *.

Between this epocha and the 1ſt of May, 1781, the creation of a navy, and the demands of the war, neceſſitated loans of 440 millions.

It is evident that the produce of all the reforms, of all the improvements which were made in that interval, however highly they may be eſtimated, can never compenſate, by a great deal, the augmentation of expence neceſſarily reſulting from the intereſt of theſe loans, which can never be reckoned at leſs than from nine to ten per cent., whether as annuities, or as relative to their reimburſements, and which has conſe-

* Mr. *Necker*, againſt whom many ſtrokes in this diſcourſe are levelled.

Translator.

quently

quently riſen to upwards of 40 millions annual. The deficiency therefore is increaſed, and the effective accounts prove the fact.

It increaſed ſtill farther from the month of May, 1781, to the month of November, 1783, nor ſhould we be aſtoniſhed at it, ſince the loans made during that interval amounted to about 450 millions.

I have ſtated, that at the end of 1783 the deficiency was not leſs than 80 millions.

Beſides this, there were 176 millions of anticipations which I compriſed in the maſs of debts, when I ſaid, that at this period they roſe to upwards of 600 millions. It is proved by the ſtate delivered to the King that they amounted to 604, ſo that, in adding to them the deficiency of 80 millions, I may well ſay there was a void of 684 millions in the expenditure of 1784.

I neither could, nor ought I to carry this entirely to the account of this ſingle year; a part of it was to be thrown upon the ſucceeding employs; and we may feel how this tranſportation, added to the annual deficiency, muſt have increaſed their difficulty; we may perceive how far theſe loans, made at the end of the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, and even joining to them that made by the city of Paris in December 1786, fall ſhort of what I had to pay; nor is it aſtoniſhing, that, to ſupply what was wanting,

I ſhould

I ſhould be inevitably compelled to recur to other reſources of credit, leſs direct and leſs oſtenſible, but all expreſſly approved of by His Majesty, who was acquainted with the motives, and the uſes made of them.

The combination of all theſe means of credit, which have only been exerted with the greateſt poſſible reſerve, is far ſhort of forming a ſum equal to that of the payments effected in the courſe of the laſt three years — order, œconomy, and the arrangements of which a great manutention is ſuſceptible, have performed the reſt, and all is paid.

But it does not the leſs follow from thence that the annual deficiency is ſtill on the increaſe. The cauſes of this are too public to render its effects myſterious.

Theſe cauſes all explain themſelves by a ſingle obſervation. The deficiency was 37 millions at the end of 1776; and from that period to the end of 1786, 1250 millions have been borrowed.

You know, Gentlemen, how neceſſary theſe loans were: They have ſerved to create for us a formidable navy; they have ſerved glorioufly to maintain a war which, *from its principle, and from its object*, has juſtly been denominated A NATIONAL WAR; they have ſerved for the enfranchiſement of the ſeas; they have ſerved, in ſhort, to procure a ſolid and durable peace,

which ſhould give time to repair all the embarraſſment which ſo enormous an expence has occaſioned in the finances.

It would however be holding forth a very exaggerated idea of the actual deficiency, in meaſuring its extent, to join the intereſt of this maſs of loans, to what it already was at an anterior date. On the one hand, the King's revenue is augmented, as well by the produce of the ſols on each livre impoſed in 1781 *, as by the conſiderable ſums lately obtained for the renewal of the privileges of the different companies of finance: on the other, there has been at leaſt 250 millions leſs of reimburſements, which have proportionably diminiſhed the intereſts, and, agreeable to the order eſtabliſhed, as well for ſuch of thoſe reimburſements which are at fixed periods, as for thoſe which are to ariſe from the ſinking fund, a capital of upwards of 400 millions will ſtill farther be extinguiſhed in the following ten years; after which the King will come into the full poſſeſſion of more than 60 millions revenue, which is at preſent abſorbed by the reimburſements already aſſigned, and by their intereſt.

But until that period, that is, until the end of

* This was a tax of one ſol on each livre, being a twentieth on the creditors in the *Old Funds*.

TRANSLATOR.

1797, it is impoſſible to leave the State in the imminent danger to which it is inceſſantly expoſed by ſuch a deficiency as that which actually ſubſiſts; impoſſible every year to have recourſe to palliatives and expedients, which, by retarding the criſis, might only render it the more fatal; impoſſible to do any good, to purſue any plan of œconomy, to procure any of thoſe reliefs which the King's goodneſs deſtines for the people, as long as this diſorder ſhall prevail.

It was my duty to declare it, it was my duty to unveil to the King this melancholy truth, which has fixed all his attention; and His Majesty is deeply penetrated with the neceſſity of employing the moſt efficacious means to remedy the evil.

But what can be theſe means?

Always to borrow, would be to aggravate the evil, and precipitate the ruin of the State.

To lay on farther impoſts, would be to overwhelm the people, whom the King wiſhes to ſolace.

To continue to anticipate—this has been but too much practiſed, and prudence demands an annual diminution of the maſs of the actual anticipations.

To œconomiſe—it muſt be done without doubt; His Majesty wills it; it is now practiſing; it

will be practiſed more and more. All poſſible retrenchments of expence, even in his own houſehold, all ſuch as the different departments will admit of, without weakening the powers of the State. Theſe he has reſolved upon, and his reſolutions are always carried into effect: but œconomy alone, however rigorous it may be ſuppoſed, would prove inſufficient, and could only be conſidered as an acceſſary means.

I never thought of placing in the rank of reſources that which, by deſtroying credit, would forfeit every thing which the immutable fidelity of the King to his engagements does not permit him to look upon as poſſible, that which would be as repugnant to his heart as to his juſtice *.

What does there remain, then, to fill up this frightful chaſm, and to find the deſired level?

What does there remain capable of ſupplying every deficiency, and of proving all that is neceſſary for the reſtoration of the finances?

ABUSES!

Yes, Gentlemen, it is in abuſes themſelves that we find a fund of riches, which the State is entitled to claim, and which muſt ſerve to re-

* Alluding to the ſhameful robbery of the public creditors in the late reign. TRANSLATOR.

eſtabliſh order. It is in the proſcription of abuſes that the ſole means of providing for every want reſides. It is from the very heart of the diſorder that a teeming ſource muſt ſpring, which ſhall fertilize every member of the Monarchy.

Abuſes have for their advocates, intereſt, credit, fortune, and antient prejudices, which time ſeems to have reſpected; but what can their vain conſideration effect in oppoſition to the public good, and the neceſſity of the ſtate?

The greateſt of all abuſes would be to attack thoſe only of minor importance, thoſe which intereſting but the feeble, oppoſe but a feeble reſiſtance to their reformation, but the reformation of which can produce no ſalutary reſource.

The abuſes which it is now propoſed to annihilate for the public welfare are the moſt conſiderable, the moſt patroniſed, thoſe which have taken the deepeſt root, and ſpread out the moſt extenſive branches.

Of this nature are the abuſes, whoſe exiſtence weighs on the productive and laborious claſſes; the abuſes of pecuniary privileges; the exceptions to the common law; and thoſe numberleſs, unjuſt exemptions which can only alleviate the burden of one part of the taxables, by aggravating the ſufferings of the reſt:

The

The general inequality in the repartition of the ſubſidies, and the enormous diſproportion between the contributions of the different provinces, and between the burdens of the ſubjects of the ſame Sovereign:

The rigour and arbitrary collection of the *Taille:*

The dread, the reſtraints, and almoſt the diſhonour imprinted on the commerce of the firſt productions:

The interior offices of the forms, and thoſe barriers which render the different parts of the kingdom ſtrangers the one to the other:

The duties which diſcourage induſtry, thoſe which require exceſſive expences in the levying, and innumerable ſubalterns; ſuch as ſeem to invite to ſmuggling, and which cauſe the annual ſacrifice of many thouſand citizens:

The decay of the Crown domains, and the little utility ariſing from their feeble remains:

The deſtruction of the King's foreſts, and the vices of their adminiſtration:

Every thing, in ſhort, which diminiſhes the produce, every thing which weakens the reſources of credit, every thing which renders the revenues inſufficient, and all ſuperfluous expences which abſorb them.

If ſo many abuſes, the ſubjects of eternal cenſure, have hitherto reſiſted the public opinion which has proſcribed them, and the efforts

of

of the Miniſters who have tried to find out a remedy, it is becauſe the attempt has been made by partial experiments, which can only be ſucceſsful from one general operation; it is becauſe it has been deemed practicable to correct without extirpating the ſeeds of the diſorders; it is becauſe endeavours have been uſed to perfect the adminiſtration of the State, without correcting its diſcordancies, without reſtoring it to that principle of uniformity which can alone remove all the difficulties of detail, and revivify the whole body of the Monarchy.

The views which the King is pleaſed to communicate to you have all of them this tendency: This is neither a ſyſtem, nor a new invention; it is the reſult, and, ſo to ſpeak, the combination of the projects of utility, long ſince conceived by the moſt able ſtateſmen, frequently preſented in perſpective by the Government itſelf, ſome of which have had a partial trial, and all of which ſeem to meet the ſuffrages of the nation; but the entire execution of which has hitherto appeared impracticable from the difficulty of conciliating a multitude of local uſages, of pretenſions, of privileges, and of intereſts in oppoſition with each other.

When we conſider by what a ſeries of ſucceſſive increaſe, by how many additions of countries variouſly governed, the kingdom has attained its actual conſiſtence, we muſt not be aſtoniſhed

aſtoniſhed at the diſparity of adminiſtrations, at the multitude of heterogeneous forms, and the incoherence of principles which diſunite it in all its parts.

It was not in the boſom of that ignorance and that confuſion which cover with a veil the reigns of our firſt races;

It was not when our Kings, ill eſtabliſhed on their Thrones, were wholly occupied in repelling the inceſſant uſurpations of their great vaſſals;

It was not amidſt the diſorders, and the anarchy of the feodal ſyſtem, when a band of petty tyrants, from the receſſes of their fortified caſtles, exerciſed the moſt revolting pillages, overturned all the principles of the Conſtitution, and interpoſed their chimerical pretenſions between the Sovereign and his ſubjects;

It was not when the rage of the Croiſades, enflamed by the double enthuſiaſm of religion and of glory, tranſported to another hemiſphere the forces, the bravery, and the misfortunes of France;

It was not when a Prince, who obtained the ſurname of *Auguſt*, recovered the principal diſmemberments of his crown, and augmented its power and its ſplendor; nor when the gloomy policy of one of his ſucceſſors, by giving extenſion to the municipal government, paved the way for uniting in the hands of the Sovereign all

all the ſprings of the public energy; nor when the Monarch, the moſt covetous of glory, and the moſt valorous of knights, diſputed with the Sovereign, his rival, that celebrity which they both acquired at the expence of their people;

It was not in thoſe tumultuous and ſiniſter days when fanaticiſm, rending the bowels of the State, filled it with calamities and horrors; nor when that good King, ſo dear to every Frenchman, after conquering his kingdom with the point of his ſword, had to remedy the long diſorders, and the diſaſtrous effects of the civil wars;

It was not when all the energy of an able and redoubted Miniſter concentered itſelf in the double project of enchaining the ambition of a power become formidable to Europe, and of ſecuring the tranquillity of France by ſtrengthening the monarchical power;

Nor was it under that brilliant reign, when the beneficent intentions of a great Monarch were too often interrupted by ruinous wars; when the State became impoveriſhed by its victories, whilſt the kingdom was *depopulated by intolerance*; when the deſire of impreſſing every thing with a character of grandeur too frequently diverted the attention from the ſolid proſperity of the State;

It was not, in ſhort, before the Monarchy had extended its limits to the points naturally deſtined to circumſcribe them, before it was arrived at its maturity, and tranquillity, both abroad and at home, was ſolidly eſtabliſhed by the ſage moderation of its Sovereign, that there exiſted a poſſibility of reflecting on what is vicious in the conſtitution, and of labouring to reduce the general adminiſtration to a plan of more general uniformity.

It was reſerved to a youthful and virtuous King, whoſe only paſſion is to promote the happineſs of his ſubjects, by whom he is adored, to undertake, after the moſt mature examination, and to execute, with an unſhaken will, what none of his predeceſſors have been able to effect, to produce concord and combination between all the parts of the body politic, to perfect the organization of the whole, and to lay the foundations of an unalterable proſperity.

It is to attain this object that, founding himſelf on the moſt ſimple and moſt natural of ideas, that of the unity of principles, which is the wiſh of juſtice and the ſource of good order; he has applied it to the moſt eſſential objects of the adminiſtration of his kingdom; and that he is convinced, from the long meditation on the conſequences which muſt reſult from it, that he will there reap the double advantage

vantage of augmenting his revenues, and of ſolacing his people.

THIS GENERAL VIEW has led HIS MAJESTY, in the firſt place, to beſtow his attention on the different forms of conducting the adminiſtration, which take place in the different provinces of the kingdom, where there is no convocation of the ſtates. In order that the reparation of the public burdens may ceaſe to be arbitrary and unequal in them, he has reſolved to entruſt the care of them with the proprietors themſelves, and he has drawn from the firſt principles of the monarchy the uniform plan of a gradual order of deliberations, according to which the emanation of the wiſhes of the taxables, and their obſervations concerning every thing which intereſts them, may be tranſmitted from the *parochial aſſemblies*, to thoſe of *the diſtrict*, from them to the *provincial aſſemblies*, and from the latter to the throne.

HIS MAJESTY has next applied himſelf with the moſt particular attention to the eſtabliſhment of the ſame principle of uniformity, and a proportional equality in the reparation of the territorial impoſt, which he looks upon as the baſis, and as eventually the ſtandard of all the other contributions. He has perceived by the account laid before him of the manner in which the *twentieths* are now collected; that

inſtead of reſting as they ought to do, on the whole lands of the kingdom, in the juſt proportion of their reſpective value and productions, they undergo an infinity of tolerated rather than legitimate exceptions; that in the countries adminiſtered by ſtates, they acquit them by diſproportionate compoſitions; that credit and opulence have ſucceeded by indirect means in obtaining partial exemptions, whilſt the leſs wealthy are compelled to ſupport them in all their rigour; that verifications, at all times diſquieting, and often interrupted, and very incomplete in the preſent ſtate of things, could never furniſh a certain rule of fixation; that the reſults, in ſhort, of this general impoſition, inſtead of affording Government the knowledge ſo eſſentially neceſſary, of the productions of the kingdom, and of the comparative balance of the abilities of each province, ſerved only to manifeſt the abuſive inequality of their reſpective burdens, and were very far from preſenting a receipt equal to the value announced by the very denomination of this impoſt.

His Majesty is of opinion that the method of remedying theſe inconveniencies, by the ſole application of the rules of an exactly diſtributive juſtice, of ſecuring to the fundamental principle of the impoſt, of carrying it to its true worth, without overcharging any body,

body, in according even ſome relief to his people, and of rendering all privileges inapplicable to the mode of its collection, would be to ſubſtitute for the *twentieths* a general aid which, extending over the whole ſuperficies of the kingdom, ſhould conſiſt in a proportional quotity of all its productions, whether in kind for ſuch as are ſuſceptible of it, or in money for the others, and ſhould admit of no exception even in favour of his domain, nor any other diſtinctions whatever, except thoſe reſulting from the different qualities of the ſoil, and the variety of the produce.

The property of eccleſiaſtics is neceſſarily compriſed under this general repartition, which, in order to be juſt, ſhould univerſally embrace the lands, like that protection of which it is the price. But that this property may not be overcharged by continuing to pay the tenths, which are levied for the debts of the Clergy, the King, the ſovereign protector of the churches of his kingdom, has reſolved to provide for the reimburſement of that debt, by granting to the clergy the neceſſary authorizations to pay it off.

From the ſame principle of juſtice which admits of no extenſion with reſpect to the territorial impoſition, His Majesty has thought it equitable, that the firſt orders of his ſtate, who are in poſſeſſion of thoſe honorary diſtinctions

tions which he means to preſerve to them, and which he wiſhes them to enjoy in future even more completely, ſhould be exempt from every ſpecies of perſonal tax, and conſequently, that they ſhould no longer pay the capitation, or poll tax, the very nature and denomination of which ſeem but little compatible with their ſituation.

His Majesty would have wiſhed that the produce of the territorial tribute which is ſubſtituted for the *twentieths*, had enabled him immediately to diminiſh the burden of the *taille*, to as great an extent as he propoſes.

He is aware to what a degree this impoſition, and the arbitrary mode of its collection, bears heavy on the moſt ſuffering part of his ſubjects; and if it be the part of wiſdom to ſuſpend the entire accompliſhment of his beneficent intentions, until he be acquainted with the reſults of this new form of revenue from the lands, and the provincial adminiſtrations ſhall have enlightened him reſpecting the methods of rectifying the repartition of the *taille*, or poll tax, he is deſirous at leaſt of proviſionally correcting its principal vices, and of not deferring the enjoyment of his people on the commencement of a reduction on the total maſs of that impoſition.

The entire Liberty of the commerce of grain, ſecured in favour of agriculture and of

property, under the ſole reſtriction of acquieſcing in the demands of other provinces, when ſome of them ſhall think it neceſſary to lay a temporary prohibition on foreign exportation, and without preventing the paternal ſolicitude of the King for every thing which intereſts the ſubſiſtence of his people, from beſtowing on that important object the ſalutary, but never diſquieting cares of an imperceptible attention.

THE ABOLITION of the Corvées in kind, and the commutation of that too cruel ſervice, into a pecuniary equivalent, diſtributed with more juſtice, and ſo employed as to enſure its inviolable deſtination.

THE FREEDOM of the interior circulation; the removal of the barriers to the frontiers; the eſtabliſhment of an uniform tariff combined with the intereſts of commerce; the ſuppreſſion of ſeveral duties injurious to induſtry, or too ſuſceptible of vexations, and the exoneration of the burden of the *gabelle*, or exciſe on ſalt, to which I have never ſpoken to HIS MAJESTY, that his heart was not ſenſibly touched with regret at not being able to free his ſubjects entirely from the burden.

Theſe, GENTLEMEN, are ſo many ſalutary operations, which form part of the plan, of which HIS MAJESTY will order the details to be developed to you, and which all concur in the views

views of order and uniformity whereon it is founded.

After beſtowing his principal attention on theſe great objects, the King applied himſelf to the means of accelerating the liberation of the public debt—a liberation already aſſured by the invariable aſſignation of the ſums annually paid into the ſinking fund, and by the perpetual employ of the progreſſive fund reſulting from the combined intereſts of the different extinctions.

His Majesty has conſidered, that his domains, a great portion of which is long ſince eclipſed by engagements, by apanages, by conceſſions of every kind, and the feeble remains of which, though better adminiſtered of late years, are encumbered with charges and expences which abſorb one half of their produce, could never acquire in his hands a value proportionate to that of private property; that they were, and perpetually muſt be, aſſailed by a multitude of requeſts, againſt which the goodneſs of the Sovereign, the moſt reſerved in his liberalities, finds it difficult to defend itſelf, and that it is poſſible to derive more advantage from them by means of infeodation, ſince, without diminution of revenue, and in retaining the direct ſuperiority, which is an eſſentially inalienable object, their produce might ſerve in the extinction

extinction of a part of the funded debts of the State.

His Majesty has not thought proper to adopt the same method respecting his forests; he reserves to himself the entire property of them, and proposes to improve the profits arising from them by an administration better directed, less incommodious for the public, and less expensive, than that of the *Grands Maîtres*.

You will see, Gentlemen, in the last result, the influence of these different operations with respect to His Majesty's finances; you will be made acquainted with some of the dispositions which are more directly relative thereto, and which tend—the one, to make good the receipts by means which will not be burdensome, such as a more exact collection of the stamp duty; the others, to make every possible retrenchment in the expences; and all of them, to establish amongst themselves that equilibrium, without which there can neither be real œconomy, nor solid power, nor durable tranquillity.

The pains which the King has taken to extend the operations of the Caisse d'Escompte, to render them of more utility to commerce, and at the same time to augment the security of its engagements, will completely prove to you how attentive His Majesty is to every thing which

can procure any advantage to his ſubjects, with what vigilance he watches over the public intereſt.

You will diſcover, in ſhort, on the whole of the plan reſpecting the execution of which His Majesty has thought proper to conſult you, that it is ſo uſeful for good order, ſo neceſſary for the redreſs of abuſes, ſo advantageous for the people, that he muſt deſire it to be carried into effect, did not even the ſituation of the finances imperiouſly preſs it.

Who can entertain a doubt of the diſpoſitions with which you are about to enter into theſe great intereſts? Called by the King to the honourable function of co-operating in his benevolent views, animated with ſentiments of the pureſt patriotiſm, which in every Frenchman's heart is confounded with love for the Sovereign, with love of honour, you will look at nothing, in the inquiry you are about to make, but the general good of the nation, whoſe eyes are fixed upon you.

You will remember, that *the fate of the country* is in queſtion, and that ordinary means would neither effect the good the King wiſhes to procure for it, nor preſerve it from the evils he wiſhes to prevent.

The obſervations you will preſent to His Majesty, will have for their object, to ſecond and to perfect the accompliſhment of his intentions;

tentions; they will be inſpired by zeal, and mingled with the expreſſions of gratitude due to a Monarch, who adopts no projects but thoſe in which he diſcovers the comfort of his people, who unites himſelf to his ſubjects, who conſults them, who never appears before them, but as their FATHER.

Let others recall this maxim of our Monarchy; *what wills the King, that wills the law*; HIS MAJESTY'S maxim is, *what wills the happineſs of the people, that wills the King.*

THE END.